Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. XV, No. 2
April 1988

THE *AHIMSĀ* PRECEPT OF THE INDIAN RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS AND THE UTILITARIAN THINKING OF JEREMY BENTHAM, JAMES MILL AND JOHN STUART MILL : NOTES ON SOME POINTS OF CONTACT

I

The sanctity of life and its inviolability are underscored in one way or another in the principal religious systems which originated in India, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The call to refrain from injuring or harming living beings (*ahiṁsā*[1]) is consequently echoed in all of them, though Jainism on the whole tends to give it a far stricter interpretation than either of the other two systems.[2] Indeed, a famous Sanskrit aphorism projects the view that *ahiṁsā* is the cardinal precept of morality.[3] Now, it would be appropriate to indicate at the outset that this precept has inspired quite a range of ethical attitudes, and some of them, to be sure, have served as influential determinants of public policy in India in particular time and again through the centuries. The renunciation of war, pacifism and the eschewing of violence as political weapon are especially noteworthy in this connection, for famous figures in Indian history (like the emperor Asoka and Mahatma Gandhi) have espoused them with great distinction and effect.[4] But *ahiṁsā* has also helped to nurture a highly distinctive attitude towards the non-human sentient world, in a word, the animals. Indeed, the belief that every creature born into this world has a right to live out its life without let or hindrance, and the concomitant moral prescription that humans ought, as a matter of duty, to ref-

Received : 28-10-85

rain from hurting or destroying living beings, are often seen as unique aspects of the complex body of attitudes that have their roots in *ahiṁsā*.[5] And both, significantly, are by and large alien to the dominant trends of Western thought and belief. The Judeo-Christian tradition, it should be noted, lends weight to the view that animals exist for the most part to subserve human ends, and that man's moral obligations, in any event, are owed exclusively to his "neighbours", in other words, to those who belong to the human race.[6] Again, influential Western philosophical opinions (like those rooted in Cartesian thought which depicted animals as unfeeling automata) actually serve to reinforce a diminished regard for animals or at least to distance them from man's primary moral concerns.[7]

Now because, no doubt, of its evident contrariety to certain settled European perceptions, the attitude to animals which is inculcated by the *ahiṁsā* precept actually became the focus of a few rather striking Western philosophic comments in the 18th and 19th centuries. Those associated with the British utilitarian philosophers, I believe, are especially notworthy. The fleeting and very inchoate nature of these comments, and the fact that they were made well before Oriental scholarship had clarified the real basis of Indian religious standpoints cannot, I think, be valid reasons for overlooking them. Indeed, the *ahiṁsā* precept is perhaps the most notable ethical principle associated with Indian religious systems to attract any kind of response from major British philosophers of the last two centuries. Both leading figures of the English utilitarian movement—Jeremy Bentham and James Mill—showed an awareness of this precept in famous contexts of their writing. John Stuart Mill, admittedly, did not follow their example in specifically referring to it. Yet in defending Bentham's arguments on behalf of "animal rights", and again in the course of his own wider reflections on animals and

our duties towards them, he sometimes came close to articulating views which have an inner affinity with aspects of the attitudinal background in question and inspires the *ahiṁsā* precept—especially, I think, as the background in question tended to be clarified in Jaina and Buddhist thought. Thus while the relevant references of Bentham and James Mill are historically noteworthy as evidences of East–West philosophic contacts John Stuart Mill's reflections on certain moral and psychological issues that touch on animals afford a good deal of scope for the pursuit of an instructive comparative effort.

Neither aspect of this rather complex subject, however, seems to have attracted serious notice so far. Recent writers have justly highlighted Bentham's poineering role in bringing the claims of animals to the threshold of Western philosophy as a distinct moral issue.[8] Yet his important, even if veiled, remark relating to *ahiṁsā* (which preceded his observation about the capacity of animals to suffer[9]) generally tends to be overlooked. Again, even while it is acknowledged that the debate on the moral status of animals "must range more widely if it is to do justice to the variety of questions and considerations that arise in this field",[10] contemporary Western inquirers who engage themselves in it rarely, if ever, pause to look beyond their immediate cultural boundaries.[11] This tendency, however, is somewhat unfortunate. For much of what is permanently at stake in the above debate can be illuminatingly linked to ancient wisdom—both philosophical and psychological — that surrounds the Indian precept of *ahiṁsā*. Some of John Stuart Mill's 19th century views, I think, form a good basis for bringing this to the fore. It is indeed noteworthy that quite a few of the basic attitudes and perceptions that are associated with the traditional clarifications relating to *ahiṁsā* tend, at times, to be echoed in secular Western arguments that seek to justify a sympathetic consideration of animals and their welfare.[12]

In what follows, I propose, then, to relate the *ahiṁsā* precept of the Indian religious systems to aspects of the thinking of the principal utilitarian philosophers of the last two centuries — Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and John Stuart Mill. Though the facts highlighted and the reflections offered here should be of primary interest to the historian and the comparativist in the field of philosophical ideas, ethicists in particular who evince an inclination to probe into the moral status of animals within a truly broad philosophical framework might, I trust, also find much to hold their attention in this discussion. For its focus, to be sure, is on the ideas, beliefs and values in terms of which two influential—but very unlike—traditions have endeavoured to view what is after all a singularly compelling presence in our individual and collective lives : the non-human species, animals.

II

It would be appropriate to begin this inquiry by clarifying Bentham's inchoate remark about Indian attitudes to the animal world. It is set forth in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789).[13] Animals attracted his attention here somewhat in passing, in the course of an inquiry into a matter central to the above work as whole, namely the limits between private ethics and the art of legislation.[14] What agents under the influence of man's direction, Bentham asked, are susceptible of happiness ? Other human beings and animals, he answered, are two sorts of such agents And commenting on the latter, he noted pointedly that " on account of their interests having been neglected by the insensitivity of ancient jurists ", animals indeed " stand degraded to the class of things ". And in dwelling further on this theme Bentham gave expression to a series of some striking observations, the underlying principles of which, as will be seen shortly, were subsequently upheld and defended by John Stuart Mill.

Bentham sought to view the non-human animal species on the basis of a norm which stressed their capacity to suffer; its appeal obviously was thus to our feelings of compassion.[15] Not surprisingly, it was in proposing this norm (which present-day advocates of animal rights find " forward looking "[16]) that he had occasion to actually refer to the status of animals in non-Western societies. " Under the Gentoo and Mohammedan religions ", he said, " the interests of the rest of animal creation seems to have met with some attention ". Of course it would be wrong to assume that the attitude to animals which Islam enunciates is any different to that in other religions of the Judeo-Christian tradition generally. What he wanted to highlight in making the above statement was perhaps the notable consideration given to animals within the civilization that had developed in India;[17] and this we know was entirely the consequence of the common inculcation of the *ahiṁsā* precept by its three principal indegenous religious traditions. In any event, Bentham deplored the absence of a universal sensitivity to the claims that animals have to our sympathy and consideration. His further thoughts on this subject (which were prompted by the situation in the West) included some incisive arguments, and hence deserve brief notice.

Bentham protested against the infliction of torments on animals.[18] Being totally unprotected, the legal position of animals in contemporary western society, he maintained, was comparable to that of slaves sometime ago. Yet he entertained the hope that " the rest of animal creation " will some day " acquire those rights which could never have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny ". The moral grounds for such an extension of rights to animals, he argued, are solid and persuasive. Animals in common with humans, have the capacity to suffer : and this, he insisted, was the most important thing that needs to

be taken into account in shaping our attitudes towards animals. Bentham, significantly, was not prepared to concede that anatomical differences, not for that matter, the absence of reasoning powers, can be a valid basis for denyiag lower animals their rights. [19]

One cannot be sure of the extent of Bentham's understanding of *ahiṁsā* which fostered a consideration for animals in India. It is evident, however, that he did not regard that consideration itself to be odd or misplaced. On the contrary, the elaboration of his own plea on behalf of animal rights after a reference to the status of animals under Hinduism in particular indeed suggests that he was at least prepared to take a cue from the famous precept associated with Indian religions.

Now, in the course of his long discussion of Hinduism in *The History of British India* (1818)[20] James Mill also identified the " sacredness which it imprints on the life of animals " as a distinctive feature of Hinduism. Among other things, he highlighted in this connection Hinduism's proclivity for vegetarianism, and noted pointedly that according to its teachings " to deprive any sensitive creature of life, is a heinous transgression of religious duty ". Significantly enough, James Mill (unlike Bentham) did not, however, give the slightest hint that there was anything to learn from the way Hindus treated animals. The Hindu concern for sentient life was to James Mill just a " superstition ": it had, in his view, nothing to do with a " sensitivity to the feelings of animated creatures ".[21] All in all, James Mill did not hesitate to affirm that " to renounce the benefits which inferior animals are fitted by nature to render to man is not humanity, any more than swinging before an idol by an iron hook ", for example, is the " virtue of self command ".

This notably negative evaluation of the beliefs and behaviour associated with *ahiṁsā* was of course a part of a larger critique

of Hinduism which James Mill set forth in his famous work.[22] Needless to say, admirers of Indian religion are not likely to consider the interpretations projected in the above evaluation to be tenable. As will be seen in the sequel, attempts were made in certain religious texts to justify *ahiṁsā* by a species of argumentation : James Mill's claim that it is just a religiously inculcated prohibition can be, therefore, challenged. On the other hand, it would be well to remember that a basic thrust of his thinking has come to be echoed by certain recent investigators. Ludwig Alsdorf, for example, has indeed advanced the view that *ahiṁsā* originally had more to do with a magical–ritualistic taboo against taking life rather than an ethical duty as now understood.[23]

Clearly, then, Bentham's and James Mill's inchoate comments on the attitudes Hindus adopt towards animals can be indeed the basis for divergent assessments of not only the *ahiṁsā* precept itself, but also perhaps of the larger moral question relating to man's relationship to the non-human sentient world. In turning next to John Stuart Mill's thinking on animals, I propose initially to highlight the extent to which the positions he takes on this subject sometimes parallel those of Buddhism and Jainism in particular, and then pass on to a brief consideration of the differences that nevertheless separate them. For Mill, after all, was a secular philosopher with firm roots in Western culture.

III

Some of John Stuart Mill's most striking reflections on animals and their claims to our consideration emerged in the course of a spirited defence of Bentham's views on these subjects against an attack made on them by a contemporary critic, William Whewell.[24] It was Whewell's contention, Mill observed, that Bentham's "greatest happiness principle" was susceptible to a

crushing *reductio ad absurdum* because Bentham had actually sought to consider the " pleasures and pain of animals as those of human beings. "[25] In rejecting this contention, Mill affirmed, on the contrary, that Bentham's thinking on animals was a " noble anticipation " of a better morality.[26] And echoing Bentham's own views, he drew attention in this connection to the existence of a parallelism between Whewell's attitude to animals and the ways in which certain races and classes were (or are) regarded by those who remain strangers to liberal, egalitarian ideas. Mill noted :

> Nothing is more natural to human beings, nor, up to a certain point in cultivation, more universal, than to estimate the pleasures and pains of others as deserving of regard exactly in proportion to their likeness to ourselves. These superstitions of selfishness had the characteristics by which Dr. Whewell recognizes his moral rules; and his opinion on the rights of animals shows that in this case at least he is consistent. We are perfectly willing to stake the whole question on this issue. Granted that any practice causes more pain to animals than it gives pleasure to man; is that practice moral or immoral ? And if, exactly in proportion as human beings raise their heads out of the slough of selfishness, they do not with one voice answer "immoral", let the morality of the principle of utility be for ever condemned.[27]

Thus, to Mill's way of thinking, the exclusion of animals from our moral concerns was unwarrented. He indeed projects the view that it could be only justified on the basis of a myopic interpretation of rights such as is sustained by a coldly insensitive outlook. It is interesting to note that in his essay on " Bentham "[28] Mill remarked with evident admiration that what this seminal figure in the history of utilitarianism had before his

mind's eye was " the happiness of the whole sentient world ". Significantly enough, Mill himself proceeded to define his own ethical perspectives on similar lines. In his most important treatise on ethics[29] he maintained that the pleasures and pains of animals must be counted for purposes of utilitarian calculation (albeit with the proviso, " so far as the nature of things allows ").

Now on occasion Mill tended to refer to animals as creatures without reason[30] and the irrationality of animals, it must be remembered, has always been a classic basis for not only subordinating them to the interests of man, but also, frequently, of overlooking them altogether. Still Mill, in any event, does not appear to have sought to derive any conclusions regarding the treatment of animals from the above characterization. On the contrary, in " Utilitarianism " itself he drew attention to an affinity that exists between human beings and other species. And he saw this in their tendency to counter harm done and again in their common capacity to feel sympathy. Mill did not set out to discuss the origin of this sentiment; however he maintained that :

> Whether it be an instinct or a result of intelligence, it is, we know common to all animal nature; for every animal tries to hurt those who have hurt, or it thinks are about to hurt itself or its young. Human beings, on this point, only differ from other animals in two particulars. First in being capable of sympathizing, not solely with their offspring, or, like some of the more noble animals, with some superior animal who is kind to them, but with all human, and even with all sentient, beings. Secondly, in having a more developed intelligence, which gives a wider range to

...3

> the whole of their sentiments, whether selfregarding or sympathetic.[31]

Before proceeding to a clarification of some other facets of Mill's thinking on animals, it might be instructive to pause here and find out how the above views compare with the attitudes that are associated with *ahiṁsā*.[32] Now as indicated at the outset, this precept is sustained in the last analysis by the belief that the living community is a unity. Evidently, Mill's moral philosophy seems to be informed by something similar : in several contexts Mill tends to emphasize that the focus of a truly enlarged moral consciousness indeed ought to be not just mankind, but all living creatures.[33] In any event, Mill's perception of feeling, suffering and sympathy as common bonds uniting man and beast is again central to the thinking behind *ahiṁsā*. This point, among others, is strikingly underscored in two stanzas of the inflnential Buddhsit work, the *Dhammapada* :

> All tremble at punishment. All fear death; comparing others to oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill.
>
> All tremble punishment. Life is dear to all; comparing others to oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill.[34]

The Jaina texts of old indeed make the same point : " all beings are fond of life, like pleasure, hate pain, shun destruction, like life, long to live. To all life is dear."[35] And the moral injunction which was predicated on the above was again similar : " all breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away ".[36] The wide endorsement given to these views and arguments as well as the precept built upon them in the Indian cultural milieu as a whole is strikingly borne out by some of the aphorisms of the *Hitopadeśa*. Not only is *ahiṁsā* (as noted at

the ontset of this inquiry) held forth here as the cardinal precept of morality, but it is also emphasized likewise that :

> As life is dear to oneself, so it is to other creatures. The good show pity to creatures by comparing (them) to themselves.[37]

A further observation made in the *Hitopadeśa* highlights a circumstance central to the *ahiṁsā* precept as it relates to animals in particular :

> When one eats the flesh of another, mark the difference between the two—the one enjoys momentary pleasure, while the other loses his life.[38]

These citations are particularly noteworthy because they bring to the fore the rationale—the logico-philosophical basis, so to say—of the case against injuring and killing as it manifests itself in the setting of Indian thought. Evidently, *ahiṁsā*, far from being a mere prohibition against the taking of life, was conceived rather as a psychologically sound and morally arguable position. The repeated call to witness the shared feelings and to liken other creatures to oneself deserves especial notice in this connection. Reasoning of a sort is involved here; but perhaps more significant, this reasoning is informed by insights of a psychological nature. It appears that what has been identified recently as the "Principle of Psychological Continuity"[39] is indeed both assumed and invoked in several ancient Indian writings. Baldly put, the principle in question states that there is no fundamental breach between the psychological acts, states and functions of man and those of the lower animals; the idea that the feelings of lower animals in some ways model those of man is a notable consequence of this principle.[40] And it is possible to argue that the latter idea is one of the main underpinnings of *ahiṁsā*—or at least *ahiṁsā* as it tends to be inculcated

in certain notable expositions of Indian beliefs and thought. Equally important, Mill's thinking in the contexts highlighted above also appears to proceed from a tacit acceptance of the same idea : clearly, his concern for animals flowed in the final analysis from a firm belief that their capacities to feel and suffer are analogous to those of the human kind.

Now since it means non–injury, *ahiṁsā* as viewed from an etymological standpoint admittedly has negative connotations. And it has been rather unfairly deprecated on this account by at least one Western commentator. Thus, focusing on the negative implications of *ahiṁsā*, Schweitzer,[41] for example, has maintained that the compassion taught by the Indian religious systems " calls only for refraining from evil, not acting for good which a natural feeling for what was right would inspire ". However, this I think is an unfortunate misreading of the actual import of *ahiṁsā*.[42] For this precept has been traditionally held to involve commitments of a positive kind as well[43] In Jaina thought, for example, (where *ahiṁsā* is elevated to a central place), its observance has been always taken to entail not only abstention from inflicting injury and harm to the living, but also kind and compassionate actions leading to the alleviation of pain and suffering.[44] Buddhism can be said to concur with its sister religion here especially when it links non–injury *(avihiṁsā)* to the complementary virtues of compassion *(karuṇā)* and loving kindness *(mettā)*.[45] The former virtue, significantly, is identified as the desire to remove the pains and sorrows of one's fellow beings while the latter is represented as the active interest in sreking their welfare.[46] In any event, it would be instructive to mention in passing that the caring attitude to animals forstered by *ahiṁsā* clearly had an impact on state policy and law in ancient times, especially under Buddhist and Jaina rulers. Thus, animals enjoyed legal protection in the reign of the celebrated Indian

emperor Asoka.[47] And *Culavamsa,* a Buddhsit chronicle of ancient Sri Lanka reports of a king there who took pride in in curing sick animals as a part of royal duly.[48]

To turn again to Mill, one indeed finds that this "positive" side of *ahiṁsā* was often an especial focus of his thinking on animals as well. Mill saw animal suffering as a sad fact of experience in the world of nature and sought on occasion to sensitively highlight it. But more important, he also stressed on occasion the need to remove the sufferings which man wantonly and callously wrought on animals. Now, the former idea is very much in evidence in his essay on "Nature". The plight of animals, "tormenting and devouring" each other, and "prey to a thousand ills" was, in his view, a blot on the beauty of the natural order; and he indeed argued here that this circumstance militated against the (deistic) proof of a benevolent creator.[49] Even while he registered an ethical and metaphysical "protest" against the sufferings that sadly burden animals in nature, Mill tacitly recognized, however, that human concern and compassion can have no impact on removing or alleviating them. But, on the other hand, he was perceptive enough to realize that these sentiments could be meaningfully brought to bear in improving the lot of animals under human custody. Thus, in the course of his examination of the grounds and the limits of the non-interference principle *(laissez-faire)* in the *Principles of Political Economy*[50] Mill referred pointedly to the propriety of governmental intervention in order to prevent cruelty to animals. He considered the reasons for legal action in this area to be much like those urged in respect of children. "Lower animals" he declared, are the "unfortunate slaves and victims of the most brutal part of mankind": Mill wanted them protected against such abuse.[51]

Evidently, the principal ideas and sentiments that are drawn into the discussions in the above context are again consonant with the spirit of *ahiṁsā*. The reality of the pains of the animals is duly upheld in them, as is a feeling of pity for their plight. Humane treatment of animals, it is suggested, is a requirment of justice and morality and hence needs enforcement. All in all, considering, further more, the other resemblances previously highlighted, one may then say that Mill's insight into animal psychology, and his thinking on animal rights and ancillary themes contain much that is in harmony with the moral and philosophical attitudes that underpin the Indian religious precept of *ahiṁsā*. Yet a comparativist who is attentive to the numerous secondary details relating to the two sides must needs recognize that Mill's thinking also incorporates standpoints which cannot be accomodated within the framework of attitudes that sustain *ahiṁsā*.

I like next to dwell briefly on this matter; it also deserves some notice in our examination of Mill's thinking on animals. The clarifications which emerge might, I think, go some way towards underscoring the rather notable fact that even some of the closest Western philosophical " approximations " to the *ahiṁsā* teachings finally fall short of them. And it will be seen that this is so in the main for two reasons. Firstly because the emphases of Indian religious systems are not retained in exactly the same sense in Mill's thinking, and secondly because in some of his writings Mill actually tends to identify a distinctive basis for justifying a concern for animals. The basis in question may be loosely designated as the conservationist motive[62] : and unlike the religiously inspired *ahiṁsā* precept, it is entirely secular, being sustained in the last analysis by a pragmatic scientific humanism sometimes touched by an aesthetic sensitivity. Let me explain each of these points in turn.

To begin with, it should be recalled that *ahiṁsā* strictly interpreted requires the condemnation of deliberate killing or injuring as an ethical absolute. Mill did no such thing. He does not appear to have entertained any scruples with regard to the killing of animals in order to satisfy human needs, especially food. It is significant, for example, that Mill's early as well as late comments on the game laws of contemporary England proceed in the main on the assumption that hunting (and hence the killing and injuring entailed) are morally unobjectionable.[53] Furthermore, the sanctity of life which *ahiṁsā* upholds implies, among other things, that the individual creature—irrespective of its scale of evolution—must be treated as an end, never as a means.[54] Now once again, it is very doubtful whether Mill would have subscribed to this without reservation even in theory.[55] Its virtual repudiation in practical contexts (as in discussions relating to the economic management of resources), however, is amply borne out, for Mill acknowledged without any hint of disapproval man's systematic appropriation of other species in order to meet his own needs. In fact, in one instance he identified acquatic life, for example, baldly as a consumable natural resource on par with coal and ores mined from the earth.[56] All in all, in regard to living creatures used or consumed by man (like river fish stocks, whales), what disturbed Mill, it appears, was not their use or consumption but rather, doing so imprudently—or as he put it "without restraint".[57] Needless to say, this opposition to the unchecked exploitation of living things was largely dictated by economic reasons which ultimately resolve themselves into considerations of man's own long term self interest.

Thus, not *ahiṁsā* but an entirely different perception of man's relationship to the non-human species seems to be projected in the above thinking. What finally are its roots? Though Mill was a secular philosopher, still, one might not be perhaps

far off the mark if one were to link this perception to something ingrained in Western culture–namely, the Biblical representation of man as the lord of the earth with dominion over its creatures (which entailed the right to use them as well).

In any event, yet another set of ideas also played a part in determining Mill's attitudes towards the non-human world. His commitment to them was attested time and again in several writings, many of which reflect the considered thinking of his mature years. And these ideas, to be sure, are traceable to a conservationist motive—the interest, that is, in preserving life in its wild or natural state and in allowing such life free scope to exist with the least possible amount of human control or interference.[58] Now as indicated earlier, conservationism as thus understood can be broadly linked to humanism which is in some ways both scientific and pragmatic[59] (though Mill's articulations on the subject contain some aesthetic overtones as well[60]). Perhaps one of his most notable pleas on behalf of conservationism comes to the fore in the course of the rambling observations on the "Stationary State" set forth in the *Principles of Political Economy*. It is indeed striking that he took some pains to emphasize here that usefulness to man must not be the sole criterion in terms of which one should approach the non-human world. Hard-nosed pursuit of increased production in order to meet the needs of an expanding human population, he recognized, commonly entailed the extirpation of wild animals and plants. But this, he insisted, was not a good thing. Indeed, there is little satisfaction, Mill confessed, in

> .. contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture ploughed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not do-

> mesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture.[61]

Similar views were expressed elsewhere.[62] But it might be instructive to reiterate that though the beliefs which inform the thinking in all these contexts certainly entail some recognition of the value of non-human life, this recognition, nonetheless, springs from considerations which are essentially naturalistic.

IV

Our foregoing juxtaposition of utilitarian thinking and Indian religio-philosophical standpoints on the complex issues of animals and man's obligations towards them brings to the fore some interesting facts concerning Eastern and Western perception on a subject of growing contemporary relevance.[63] Though a sensitivity to the rights of animals and a caring attitude towards them have been sometimes dismissed as a peculiar emphasis of Indian religious reflection,[63] both, it seems, were justified and defended by two of the West's most practically minded philosophers, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Of course, there are differences : the utilitarian approaches did not in particular involve an acceptance of the metaphysical beliefs that lay behind the *ahimsā* precept of the Indian religious systems. How do the positions adopted by the two sides relate to each other ? What are the critical insights that stem from the comparative process in this contexts ? I think it would be perhaps appropriate to end the present inquiry by addressing to these very pertinent questions. The answers that emerge will, I trust, not only serve to recapitulate our central conclusions, but perhaps illuminate them as well.

Through its *ahiṁsā* precept Indian religious systems stress man's nearness — at the level of feeling in particular — to the rest of the animated world. Viewing the nearness in question almost as an incontestable fact of experience,[65] these systems enjoin compassion and sympathy towards all forms of sentient existence. It indeed appears that the basic insights — psychological and moral[66] ... which underlie these positions were not alien to the thinkIng of Bentham and John Stuart Mill.[67] Yet their thinking also involved a tacit recognition of man's actual lordship over animated creatures, and more important still, his need to use such creatures for his own ends. Now James Mill, for one, seems to have been persuaded that the dictates of this practical situation must be simply relied upon to provide the rules of conduct that ought to regulate main's relationship to the lesser creatures Needless to say, a stance such as this serves, to all intents and purposes, to remove animals from the sphere of our moral concerns. And, significantly, Bentham and John Stuart Mil. refused to adopt it : in stressing that the feelings of animals count, and again in pointing out that the lower species have rights, these thinkers tended in effect to highlight the fact that the treatment of animals is subject to moral evaluation. Nevertheless, in their eyes, animals finally mattered less than man. Unlike the Indian practitioners of *ahimsā* they did not, to be sure, elevate non- injury to the level of an absolute, inviolable principle.

Perhaps many are likely to feel that by taking the above stand, Bentham and John Stuart Mill place themselves squarely on the side of reason and practical common sense. For what community can wholly divest itself of the need to kill or hurt living organisms ? Such necessary concerns of ordinary life of producing food, fighting disease, ensuring security and even caring for the environment[68] all too frequently entail the injury or the destruction of countless lives. Indeed, it is almost a truism that in the

world order as we know it, humnn well being is in good measure purchased at the cost of tremendous animal suffering; and there can be no overlooking of the fact that much of this suffering is deliberately planned by human agents. Then again, though it is hardly recognized by the Indian systems, paradoxically enough, the killing of animals sometimes proceeds from the best of intentions and can be a most humane act : consider the case for destroying maimed, diseased or starving creatures who are beyond help or redemption.[69]

On the other hand critical insights of an altogether different sort can be gained by attending to the deeper implications of the *ahiṁsā* precept. And such insights, I think, are particularly useful in overcoming " speciesism " – the partial, man biased stances from which human beings, for the most part, are wont to view animals and their concerns. In this connection it is above all the sanctity of all life as proclaimed by *ahiṁsā* that one must bear in mind, for this can be a fruitful basis for restructuring ingrained habits of thought. Besides helping to validate the ethical demand to give serious consideration to the interests of animals as of people,[70] this belief can also provide a wider basis for a sensitive, enlightened attitude to our fellow creatures.[71] And respect for life, one must recognize, is not misplaced, for man's control over it is limited : we can only destroy, but not create life. In view of this circumstance in particular it is perhaps appropriate to approach living things with a sense of awe. In any event, there is room to wonder whether an interest in conservation and ecology or a commitment to the preservation of the natural environment can really generate or instil a deep seated inner feeling of respect for non-human life. Such a feeling is in many ways supra–biological, and Indian thinkers at least were persuaded that it must emerge from a context of reflection which is touched by religion

in one of its best and highest senses. The injuction not to harm or kill living beings is finally a corollary to this religiously inculcated attitude to life itself. True, as indicated above, one is at a loss to understand how a human community–anywhere, anytime–could heed to this call strictly and sincerely. But then *ahiṁsā*, as has been sometimes argued, perhaps has its classic application in the individual rather than the social plane.[12] A society or a community might not be in a position to separate itself from the need to injure or kill animals, but *an individual* can : even in a collective milieu, where respect for non-human life is absent, the individual man or woman can cultivate it, cherish it. This, to be sure, accords well with the ingrained esoterism of Indian religious systems.

35950 Timberlane Drive
Solon, Ohio 44139
(U. S. A.)

V. RAJAPAKSE

NOTES

1. Negative in its formation, the Sanskrit word *ahiṁsā* (and its Pali equivalent, *avihiṁsā*) literally means non-injury, the eschewing of deliberate cruelty. Its wider connotations include the renunciation of the will to harm, hurt or kill living creatures aud the practice instead of mercy, humanity, and friendliness and love towards them. Cf. W. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899; T. W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary*, London, 1979. As will be seen below, Indian religious systems frequently represent *ahiṁsā* as a moral precept, and the dispositional traits that develop upon its practice were especially esteemed because the traits in question were, among other things, deemed to be iudispensable in the striving for spiritual perfection (which the consensus of traditional religious opinion in India has always held forth as life's highest goal). Cf. *Yoga Sutra* 5:35 Viewed from a larger perspective *ahiṁsā* strikes one as an eminently civilized basis for

harmoniously relating the individual to his or her fellow beings, both human and non-human. Hence it can, ideally, inform moral behaviour at several levels, though the main focus of this paper is on the attitude to the non-human animal species which it inspires and sustains.

2. Several classical Hindu texts refer to *ahiṁsā;* many tend to suggest that the development of a well rounded moral and spiritual personality involves the practice of *ahiṁsā*. See, for example, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* III. 17. 4; *Bhagavad Gītā*, X. 5, XIII. 7, XVI. 2; *Yoga Sūtra* 5. 30; *Manudharmaśāstra*, 2. 177, 10. 63. Unfortunately, none of these sources delve into its background, basis or range in ways that would satisfy the modern critical inquirer. Indeed, certain recent commentators have drawn pointed attention to the reticence of these texts on this matter. Cf. W. Norman Brown, *Man in the Universe*, Berkeley, 1966, pp. 53, 65; F. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Cambridge, Mass. 1972, pp. 185–186. Yet as R. C. Zaehner (*Hinduism*, London, 1962, pp. 156ff., 232) has indicated in passing in the course of his discussion of the concept of moral law *(dharma)* in particular, some of the dilemmas and the difficulties encountered in practising *ahiṁsā* tend to be sensitively addressed in other Hindu contexts like the *Mahābhārata* or again in Gandhi's thought. Moreover, the aphoristic wisdom of mainly Hindu inspiration such as is set forth in in the famous Sanskrit " Book of Good Counsel ", the *Hitopadesa* (see note 3 below, also section III of this arlicle) both enjoins and defends *ahiṁsā* in an unmistakable manner. Abstinence from taking life is of course a fundamental requirement of both Buddhist and Jaina ethics, even though the sacred writings associated with these systems (compiled mainly in Prakritic tongues) do not always use the Sanskrit word *ahiṁsā*. This, as will be evident later, is especially true of Buddhsim. In any event, the above requirement figures most prominently in Buddhist rules of moral conduct *(pañca śīla, dasa śīla)* and Jaina vows of discipline *(mahā vrata, aṇu vrata)*. And its basis and implications are on occasion interestingly clarified within these two systems. Hurting or injury *(hiṁsā)* whether by thought, word or deed is looked upon by the Jainas in particular as the basic evil to be overcome; their stress on *ahiṁsā* both as a precept as well as a virtue is largely conditioned by this view. Anyone seeking to gain an insight into classical Indian thinking on *ahiṁsā* must therefore pay close attention to both Buddhism and Jainism.

3. This aphorism, *ahiṁsā paramo dhammaḥ* receives classic expression in the *Hitopadesa* where it is indeed pointed out that although the religious scriptures (of India, that is) disagree on other matters, they are nevertheless at one in upholding the primacy of *ahiṁsā*. See, *Hitopadesa of Nārāyaṇa*, text with trans. by M. R. Kale, New Delhi, 1980,

p. 16. Clearly, the aphorism in question can be fairly invoked by Hindus, Jainas an Buddhists alike, notwithstanding the divergent ways in which they tend to interpret its scope and practical application.

4. Cf. Vincent Smith, *Asoka*, Oxford, 1920; G. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, Oxford, 1978.

5. The characterization of *ahiṁsā* as a precept must not blind one to the extramoral considerations that surround it and give it meaning. According to one interpretation, Gandhi, for example, was inclined to view *ahiṁsā* as an "ethical absolute based upon metaphysical beliefs and issuing in a religious conviction requiring an act of faith". G. Iyer, *op. cit.* p. 196. Indian belief in rebirth (as determined by the moral agency of *karma*) needs to be especially remembered in thinking about the metaphysical underpinnings of *ahiṁsā*. One might have according to this belief, seen life in an animal state in the past and could return to it in the future : not only is an ontological relationship between man and beast thus presupposed, but it is also emphasized that it is in man's self interest to treat animals kindly, for harm done to them can (given the operations of *karma* the other crucial postulate of Indian thinking) rebound on the doer. This latter point, significantly enough, is frequently brought out in Buddhist and Jaina moralistic tales. In the Matakabhatta Jātaka, for instance, the fate of the slain animal is held to await its human slayer. See, *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* trans. ed. by E. B. Cowell, London, 1973 vol. I, p. 51 ff.

6. Cf. Genesis 1 : 26-30; Matthew 19 : 19; Luke 10 : 19-37 Also, Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, New York, 1963, pp. 69-70. As Tillich himself has hinted here, Christianity does not of course wholly exclude a compassionate concern for animals. The "Canticle of the Creatures" of St. Francis of Assisi, for example, is suffused with sentiments which anyone practising *ahiṁsā* must needs admire. The same is true of Albert Schweitzer's principle of "reverence for life", although as will be seen subsequently, the latter entertained a somewhat negative impression of *ahiṁsā*. See, Schweitzer, *The Teaching of Reverence for Life*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston, New York, 1965.

7. Cf. Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, Part V. Certain finding of Western science, as, for example, those about predator – prey relationships in nature or again food chains (not to mention the outlook that fathers practical innovations in biotechnology and genetic engineering) obviously have a similar effect. It would be well to reiterate that *ahiṁsā* is finally the ethical consequence of a very different view of the universe, one that regards life as a unity, since all living beings (as several Indian

texts discussed below indeed emphasize), are always bound by a common antipathy towards pain and an equally common urge to preserve their existence. Among the great Western philosophers only Spinoza appears to have come somewhere close to this viewpoint through his notion of "conatus" (*Ethics*, Part II, Prop. 7). The striving to preserve and persist in being was held forth here as a characteristic of being itself. However, it is important to observe that no clear ethical consequence analogous to *ahiṁsā* was drawn from it by Spinoza.

8 Cf. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation : Toward an End to Man's Inhumanity to Animals*, London, 1978, p. 28.

9. The context will be identified in section II of this article.

10. See Editorial, *Philosophy*, vol. 53 (1978), p. 433.

11. The perceptive reader is likely to notice this in practically all recent discussions which focus on the moral status of animals. Those presented in the above journal are especially noteworthy in this connection.

12. Not only the specific arguments that are brought forth to justify animal rights (cf. Peter Singer, *op. cit.*) but also the views broached in the course of recent philosophical reflections on man's relationship to the animal world need to be recalled here. For example, the idea of "fellow creature" as developed by Cora Diamond ("Eating Meat and Eating People", *Philosophy*, vol. 53, 1978, p. 474 ff.) encompasses, I think, perceptions that are interestingly redolent of deep seated Indian beliefs regarding the unity of sentient existence tied to the transitoriness and the perils of *saṁsāra*.

13. See *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. by J. Bowring (Edinburgh, 1843) vol. I, pp. 142n to 143n. The quotations that follow are taken from this long foot note and the sentences in the text to which it refers.

14. *Ibid.* Chap. XVII, sec. I.

15. As will be indicated below in discussing John Stuart Mill's view, Bentham's thinking here indeed retains a basic thrust of the Indian atitudes to animals as emphasized in Buddhist and Jaina teachings in particular.

16. Cf. Peter Singer, *op. cit.* p. 28.

17. It would be useful to note in this connection that Westerners writing even in the early part of the 19th century were of the diversity of religious systems that had flourished in India. This is well exemplified

by James Mill's discussions in *The History of British-India* (1818), the most widely consulted work on Indian history and culture at the time. These discussions give the impression that Indian civilization was influenced by just two religions, Hinduism and Islam.

18. It might be relevant to observe that Bentham did not object to the killing of animals for food; early in the passage under review here he justified this by claiming that the "death they suffer in our hands commonly is, and always may be, a speedier, and by that means a less painful one, than that which would await them in the inevitable course of nature". Interestingly enough, Singer (*op. cit.* p. 213) has pointed out that Bentham has here "lowered" his own standards of argument.

19. Though Bentham's argument does serve to break down the great metaphysical divide that has traditionally separated man and beast in the West, and is indeed retained and developed in a variety of recent discussions (cf. Peter Singer, *op. cit.;* S. R. L. Clark, *The Moral Status of Animals*, Oxford, 1977), it is by no means unimpugnable. Certain writers have pointed out that animal pain, for aught we know, may be of a different order and that any effort we make to identify ourselves with the feelings of animals could accordingly be a product of fantasy. Cf. Leslie Pickering Francis and Richard Norman, "Some Animals are More Equal than Others", *Philosophy*, vol. 53, 1978.

20. See 5th ed. (with notes and continuation by H. H. Wilson), London, 1858, vol. I, chap. VI. James Mill's comments relating to *ahiṁsā* are set forth in pp. 296–297. The quotations in the present paragraph are taken from this context.

21. It is interesting to observe that James Mill was led to this very debatable conclusion apparently by a consideration of the small provision made in Indian society for the practical alleviation of suffering, both animal and human. Relying (as is usual with him) on travellers' reports and other second hand accounts, he alluded in this connection to the cruel treatment of beasts of burden and the paucity of hospitals to care for the sick among the human population.

22. The tendentious character of this critique was recognized in the 19th century itself. The incorporation of H. H. Wilson's notes into most of the later editions of *The History of British India* was indeed prompted by the need to counteract James Mill's frequently harsh, sometimes polemical judgements regarding India's cultural heritage.

23. See, L. Alsdorf, "Beitrage zur Geschichte von Vegitarismus und Rinderverehrung in Indien" *Abhandlungen der Geistes und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klassen*, Nr. 6, 1961, p. 517 (Akadamie der

Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Main). According to this writer, "Sie (*Ahiṁsā*) hat ursprünglich mit Ethik in unserem Sinne nichts zu tun, sondern ist ein magisch-ritualistische Tabu auf das Leben, das in keiner seiner Formen zertort werden darf". However, this again is perhaps just a conjectural opinion. As I. B. Horner (*Early Buddhism and the Taking of Life*, Kandy, 1967, p. 3) has rightly pointed out, "the emergence in India of the notion of *ahiṁsā*, non-harming, non-injury is historically speaking not clear. Its origin cannot be attributed to a definite date or to any particular teacher, social reformer or law giver. The problem of the idea of non-injury is indeed as obscure as that of 'leaving the world', of forsaking home for homelessness".

24. See "Whewell on Moral Philosophy", in *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, (*Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Toronto, 1963, vol. X). Hereafter identified as CW, the volumes in this series (published at various times between 1963 and 1985) will be used throughout our subsequent references to John Stuart Mill's writings. Whewell, it should be added, was a 19th century Cambridge don who gained considerable prominence as a contributor to philosophic discussion. In the above piece Mill reviewed two of his books, namely, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England* (1852) and *Elements of Morality* (1845).

25. Mill, *op. cit.* p. 185. John Stuart Mill will be referred to simply as Mill in the rest of this section.

26. *Ibid.* Whewell admitted a universal tie of humanity which binds mankind together; but animals, he said, cannot be brought under it.

27. *Ibid.* pp. 186–187.

28. *Ibid.* p. 96.

29. "Utilitarianism" *ibid.* p. 214.

30. See *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, CW IX, p. 84. It is perhaps noteworthy that in the discussion on the concept of classification in *A System of Logic* (CW VII, 118–122) men and beasts were identified on conventional lines as members of the same genus though belonging to different species. Cf. "Grotes' Aristotle", *Essays on Philosophy and the Classics*, CW XI, pp. 503–504. Mill's logical theory, however, offers no room to regard rationality as an essence on scholastic lines.

31. "Utilitarianism", CW X, p. 247.

32. As indicated in section II of this article, *ahiṁsā* it might be in place to repeat, does not of course just spell out an attitude to animals, but

...4

rather to all forms of setient life, including man. However, for purposes of the following discussion the implications of *ahiṁsā* as it relates to the non-human species alone are considered. In a word, this precept is treated in the sequel as one which articulates a specific attitude to animals.

33. It might be in place to observe here that Mill's reference to "the whole of sentient creation" (CW X, p. 214) can be fairly juxtaposed with the compassionate focus of the Buddhists and Jains, "all beings" (sabbe satta of Buddhist texts). However, the realm of the living according to Buddhism, for example, comprehends not only humans and animals, but also divinities and spirits. Cf. E. Conze, *Buddhism, Its Essence and Development*, New York, 1959, pp. 50–51. Both Hindu and Jaina philosophies tend to agree with Buddhism on this score.

34. *Dhammapada*, X : 129–130 (The Wisdom of the East Series, trans. by Narada Thera, London, 1959 p. 43) Buddhist opposition to the destruction of animal life comes to the fore more sharply in another place in this work. X : 270 where it is stated, "He is not therefore an Ariya in that he harms living being; through his harmlessness towards all living being he is called an Ariya" (p. 67). These words, significantly, are traced to the Buddha's own efforts to wean away a fisherman from his calling which entailed the taking of life. (p. xi),

35. See *Jaina Sūtras*, trans. by Hermann Jacobi, Oxford, 1884, Part I, p. 19 Cf. p. 50 : "As it would be unto thee, so it is with him whom thou intendest to kill. As it would be unto to thee, so it is with him whom thou intendest to tyrannise over. As it would be unto thee, so it is with him whom thou intendest to torment. In the same way (it is with him) whom thou intendest to punish, and to drive away. The righteous man who lives up to these sentiments, does therefore neither kill nor cause others to kill (living beings). He should not intentionally cause the same punishment for himself".

36. *Ibid.* p. 36 Much like the *Dhammapada* (cited above) the *Jaina Sūtras* also emphasize that one should not "cause others to kill nor consent to the killing of others". (p. 31) However, it is a peculiarity of Jainism that it held plant also to be worthy of kind treatment, and hence enjoined the extension of *ahiṁsā* toward negetative life as well. Cf. *ibid.* d. 10.

37. *Hitopadesa of Nārāyaṇa*, Kale ed. p. 8 (trans) Likewise it is pointed out here that "in refusing and giving, in pleasure and pain, and in things (or acts) agreeable and disagreeable, a man knows the standard by self-comparison". (*ibid.*) The veritable absorption of *ahiṁsā* into the overall value system of classical India is notably reflected in yet

another aphoristic statement which provides a list of preferred duties and objects : " What is man's true duty in this world ? Compassion to creatures. What is real happiness ? Freedom from disease. What is affection ? Good feeling. And what is wisdom ? Decision. " (*ibid.* p. 28) Cf. p. 8 : " He who looks upon another's wife as a mother, another's wealth as a clod of earth, and upon all creatures as his own self, is a truly wise man ".

38. *Ibid.* p. 16. The agony that attends dying, it is also noted here, is too intense to be guessed or known: and *ahiṁsā* it is added, has its reward : " Those man, who are averse to all sorts of killing, who bear all things and who are the refuge to all go to heaven. "

39. For an overview of this principle see, Gareth B. Matthews. " Animals and the Unity of Psychology ", *Philosophy*, vol. 53 (1978), p. 438 ff. The findings of contemporary psychology often serve to strengthen the basis of the principle. Cf. D. O. Hebb, " Emotion in Man and Animals " *Psychological Review*, 53, 1946.

40. Cf. Gareth B. Matthews, *op. cit.* p. 439 It is interesting to observe that in a notable Buddhist context (*Anumāna Sutta, Majjima Nikāya* I, 95 ff.) the principle that one should not do others anything one does not wish to be done to oneself is represented as a datum of inferential knowledge, What is disliked or unsought by oneself, it is argued, is apt to be similarly regarded by other living beings. Cf. K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London, 1963, p. 442.

41 *Op. cit.* p. 13.

42. And it is all the more so because Schweitzer's own call for " reverence for life ", as I shall indicate in section IV of this article, is very close to the spirit of *ahiṁsā*.

43. Cf. G. B. Gokhale, *Indian Thought the Ages, A Study of Some Dominant Concepts*, New York, 1961, p. 175 ff.; S. Radhakrishnan *Indian Philosophy*, London, 1948, vol. I, p. 325 ff.

44. See, C. Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, London, 1966, p, 66; cf. W. Norman Brown, *op. cit.* p. 44 ff. Jaina believers were perhaps among the first people in history to organize and maintain shelters, refuges and hospitals for the welfare of animals.

45. Cf. Narada Thera, *The Buddha and his Teachings*, Colombo, 1980, p. 325 ff,

46. See definitions of these terms in the *Pali-English Dictionary* cited in note 1, above.

47. See E. Hultzsch, ed. *Corpus Inscriptorum Indicurum : I Inscriptions of Asoka,* Oxford, 1925; Vincent Smith, *op. sit.* It might be relevant to note that as E. Conze (Dharma as a Spiritual, Social and Cosmic Force ", in *The Concept of Order,* ed. by P. G. Kuntz, Seatlle, 1968, pp. 244–245) has pointed out, Asoka's conversion to Buddhism was in an important sense a conversion to the *ahiṁsā* precept which was of course very much a part of the Buddhist notion of *dhamma.* Interestingly enough, a recent discussion allows one to assume that both human rights and animal rights are finally justified in Buddhism on the basis of a common framework of ideas. See, Kenneth K. India, " The Buddhist Perspective of Human Rights " (in *Human Rights in Religious Traditions,* ed. by Arlene Swidler, New York, 1982).

48. See the account on the King Buddhadasa in *Cullavaṁsa,* trans. W. Ceiger and C. M. Rickmers, New York, 1973, p. 9 ff.

49. CW X, p. 399. Mill was inclined to invoke " instinct " to account for the predatorprey relationship and the attendant sufferings; those who adopt the perspectives of the Indian systems will no doubt place *karman* behind instinct itself and emphasize that the sufferings in question are in large measure pre-ordained. Though these metaphysical notions cannot be accomodated within Mill's philosophy, his thinking nevertheless tends to support the view that the sufferings animals undergo in nature are by and large irremediable.

50. CW III, p. 952.

51. Mill argued : " It is by the grossest misunderstanding of the principles of liberty, that the infliction of exemplary punishment on ruffianism practised towards these defenceless creatures, has been treated as a meddling by government with things beyond is province; an interference with domestic life. The domestic life of domestic tyrants is one of the things which it is imperative on the law to interfere with: and it is to be regretted that metaphysical scruples respecting the nature and source of the authority of government, should induce many warm supporters of laws against cruelty to animals, to seek for a justification of such laws in the incidental consequences of the indulgence of habits to human beings, rather than in the intrinsic merits of the case itself. What it would be the duty of a human being possessed of the requisite physical strength, to prevent by force if attempted in his presence, it cannot be less incumbent on society generally to repress. The existing laws of England on the subject are chiefly defective in the trifling, often almost nominal, maximum, to which the penalty even in the worst cases in limited ". (*ibid.*)

52. Mill's practical interest in conservationist causes has been clearly established; in this connection see, for example, Anna J. Mill, "JSM, Conservationist" (*The Mill News Letter*, vol. X, 1975). As will be evident in the sequel, the conservationist stance was principally applied to animals (and plants) in "wild" or "natural" conditions.

53. See, "The Game Laws" (1826) *Essays on England, Ireland and the Empire*, CW VI; letter to Lewis Sergeant (1872) *Later Letters*, CW XVII. Some hints of commisseration for the hunted, however, are not entirely lacking even in "The Game Laws"; in any event, in a later article, "The Claims of Labour" (1845) Mill spoke out against the wanton destruction of animal life by the rich for sport. See, Essays on *Economics and Society*, CW IV, p. 384.

54. Indian systems, I think, would agree with Schweitzer (*op. cit.* p. 47) in maintaining that humans are in no privileged position to fathom the importance other organisms have in themselves or in terms of the larger scheme of things in the universe.

55. It should be recalled that in our foregoing discussion of Mill's ethical stance in the "Utilitarianism" (CW X, p. 214) it was shown that he chose to take the pleasures and pains of animals into account for purposes of utilitarian calculation only "so far as the nature of things allows".

56. See, *Principles of Political Economy*, (I), CW II, pp. 30–31; cf. *Ibid.* (II), CW III, pp. 493–494. Similarly in "The Game Laws" (CW VI p. 111) he characterized game as "an article the price of which is not regulated by the cost of production".

57. *Principles of Political Economy*, (I), CW II, p. 31.

58. I do not mean to suggest here that conservationist stances and the Biblical view adumbrated above are mutually exclusive. It is no doubt possible to argue that man's position at the helm of God's creation indeed entails obligations and responsibilities as well, and that the latter when duly recognized could provide a basis for developing a caring, humane attitude towards animals. The point to be noted, on the other hand, is that conservationism as Mill articulated it does not seem to have had its roots in the above line of thought.

59. Though the theoretical considerations which underlie the conservationist view-point are outside the purview of this article, it would be nevertheless relevant to observe that those considerations have little to do with

the overt emphases of traditional religions. One central acceptance that inspires conservationist efforts is the view that mankind form only a part of the living world, and that prudential consideration (quite apart from those rooted in ethics) make it important for us to ensure the continued existence of other creatures. The ethical (or perhaps evolutionary-ethical) argument that could be invoked here centers around the idea that the dominant, most highly evolved species (Homo Sapiens) has both a duty and a responsibility to care for the lesser species (apparently on the principle *noblesse oblige*). The positions Mill takes on conservation frequently have their roots in both these theoretical notion. Cf. Mill to Chapman *Later Letters* (CW XVI, pp. 1136–1137).

60. Mill's attraction to nature and natural beauty is often borne out by statements in his *Autobiography*. Cf. E. August, "Mill's Autobiography as Philosophic Commedia", *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 11, 1973. Following his celebrated mental crisis he actually came to stress the value of cultivating one's aesthetic sensibilities. Indeed, Mill noted in his *Autobiography* (CW I, p. 57) that "nothing contributes more to nourish elevation of sentiments in a people, than the large and free character of their habitations".

61. *Principles of Political Economy*, CW III, p. 756.

62. Mill's letters in particular bear witness to his solicitude for the preservation of as much of what wild and untamed nature holds. See Mill to Andrew Reid, *Late Letters*, CW XVII, p. 1651. It should be also observed that 19th century groups that agitated for environmentalist causes enjoyed Mill's support and patronage. Thus writing to Arthur Lankester of the noted: "I have all my life beeh strongly impressed with the importance of preserving as much as possible of such free space for healthful exercise and for the enjoyment of natural beauty as the growth of population and cultivation has left to us", And reiterating a thought broached in the *Principles of Political Economy* (quoted above), he added: "The desire to engross the whole surface of the earth in the mere production of the greatest possible quantity of food and materials of manufacture, I consider to be founded on a mischievously narrow conception of the requirements of human nature". *Later Letters*, CW XVI, pp. 1140–1141.

63. The theoretical interest in sorting out the moral and philosophical questions relating to animals which has become increasingly prominent recently and the no less evident activism of animal rights campaigners need to be borne in mind here.

64. Not only James Mill but also the attitudes to compassion fostered by Nietzsche are worthy of recall in this connection.

65. Whether animals feel pain in the same sense and intensity as man, however, is a moot point. There is always a place for philosophical scepticism here; but doubts can be especially raised with regard to creatures with simple nervous structures, hibernating animals and those which are cold blooded. However, it would be a mistake to think that Indian religio-philosophical antipathy towards killing and injuring is simply predicated on a psychological insight or some biological considerations. Offences against *ahiṁsā* are condemned finally because they tend to thwart the life process, in other words, interferes, in effect, with every living being's rightful desire to be, to live out its existence. There is moreover, something else to be reckoned with : given the operations of *karma* (and the reality of rebirth), killing and injuring in the eyes of the Indian believer was also fraught with untoward consequences.

66. Namely, that animal pain is real, and that it is undesired (and hence to be avoided).

67. It might be useful to reiterate that the metaphysical ideas which support *ahiṁsā* (*karma* and rebirth in particular) were of course never entertained by these secular philosophers.

68. The " thinning " of heards and the artificial control of animal populations might be cited as examples in this connection.

69. Cf. T. Goodrich, " Morality of Killing " *Philosophy*, vol. 44, 1969.

70. The demand, in question, it must be observed, looms large in recent discussions relating to our duties to animals. Cf. P. Singer. *op. cit.*

71. Soul searching and self recrimination concerning the way man treats animals is not unknown even in circles where *ahiṁsā* or anything like it is virtually unknown. In this connection see, for example, Upton Sinclair's poignant reflections on animal suffering that accompany his harrowing account of slaughter house scenes in *The Jungle*. Indeed, the desire to see animals dealt with kindly and fairly is just as widespread as the feeling of pity for their suffering. The strong plea of " reverence for life " made by Schweitzer, a Westerner notably committed to Christian values again points to the fact that the attitudes which sustain *ahiṁsā* have an appeal and a relevance outside the milieu where they first took root. Schweitzer (*op. cit.* pp. 31–41) has observed perceptively that reverence for life arises when " intelligence operates on the will for life " and has located " all the components of ethics " within this central principle. Indeed, " to the truly ethical man ", he insisted, " all life is sacred, including forms of life that from the human point

of view may seem lower than ours". Bemoaning the scant attention paid to animals by most of the West's traditional thinkers, he has also stressed, it is worth noting, that "it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to do all possible good to non-human life". (*ibid*, pp. 47–49).

72. Cf. B. G. Gokhale, *op. cit.* p. 175. However, this must not detract one from recognizing the fact that Indian rulers like Asoka (as indicated above, section III) indeed sought to enforce the observance of *ahiṁsā* socially. Still, as I. B. Horner (*op. cit.*) has indicated, killing of animals never ceased in India, although those involved in it (hunters, butchers, trappers and the like) never won much social acceptance there.